

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ROME 05843 301836Z  
ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T ROME 5843

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 XGDS-1  
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, IT  
SUBJECT: MORO KIDNAPPING: RED BRIGADES

1. IN CONVERSATION MARCH 20 WITH POLITICAL COUNSELOR,  
NICOLA LETTIERI, UNDERSECRETARY IN TH MINISTRY OF  
INTERIOR, MADE SEVERAL INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS.

2. LETTIERI BEGAN CONVERSATION BY SAYING THAT HE WAS  
AWARE THAT A NUMBER OF REQUESTS HAD BEEN MADE TO THE  
USG BY THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT AND SENIOR ITALIAN POLI-  
TICAL FIGURES FOR INFRMATION ON THE RED BRIGADES. HE  
MENTIONEDSPECIFICALLY THBDE FROM COSSIGA AND ZACCAGNINI.  
HE SAD THAT HE WAS ALSO AWARE THAT THE USG HAD NOT MADE  
ANY SIGNIFICANT REPOSENSE TO THE REQUESTS. AS AN  
"OLD FRIEND" HE WANTED TO TELL US THAT, SINCE MANY  
BELEIVE THE USG HAS SUCH INFORMATION, OUR FAILURE TO  
RESPOND IS GIVING RISE TO UNHELPFUL SPECULATION OF ALL  
KINFS. HE SAID THAT, TO THE EXTENT HE COULD, HE  
ATTEMPTED TO STOP SUCH SPECULATION, BUT HE HIMSELF  
WONDERED WHETHER OUR FAILURE TO RESPOND WAS PERHAPS  
DUE TO OUR CONCERN THAT SUCH INFORMATION MIGHT  
FIND ITS WAY TO THE PIC.HE ASKED FOR A FRANK EX-  
PLANATION.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 ROME 05843 301836Z

3. POLITICAL COUNSELOR TOLD HIM, AS CLEARLY AS  
PSSIBLE, THAT THE USG HAD NOT PROVIDED ANY SUB-  
STANTIAL INFORMATION ON THE RE BRIGADES PRECISELY  
BECAUSE WE DO NOT HAVE IT. HE WAS TOLD THAT WE HAD  
NOT BEEN COLLECTING INFOMATION AGAINST ITALIAN  
DOMESTIC TERRORISTS OR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND  
HAVE NO CAPABILITY OF DOING SO. LETTIEIR SEEMED

TO ACCEPT THE EXPLANATION, ALTHOUGH HE WAS OBVIOUSLY DISAPPOINTED AT ITS CONTENT. HE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT IT WAS IN SHARP CONFLICT WITH THE CONVICTIONS OF MANY SENIOR ITALIAN OFFICIALS. HE AGREED TO DO HIS BEST TO CONVINCE THEM THAT, IN FACT, WE DON'T HAVE THE DESIRED INFORMATION. THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR MENTIONED THAT WE HAVE COME ACROSS LIMITED BITS OF INFORMATION ON WHAT WE BELIEVE TO BE LIMITED INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS BY THE RED BRIGADES, BUT THAT THIS INFORMATION HAD ALREADY BEEN PROVIDED TO THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR AGAIN ASSURED HIM THAT THAT WAS ALL RELEVANT INFORMATION THAT WE HAD.

4. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE ATTITUDES WITHIN THE PCI REGARDING THE MORO KIDNAPPING, LETTIERI SAID THAT THE PCI WAS "LYING LOW" IN TERMS OF PUBLICLY VISIBLE ACTIVITY AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. HE SAID THAT THE PARTY WAS VERY BUSY IN A NATIONWIDE CAMPAIGN TO MOBILIZE ITS BASE IN SUPPORT OF THE PARTY'S OFFICIAL POSITION FAVORING LAW AND ORDER AND CONDEMNING TERRORISM. LETTIERI SAID THAT THIS POSITION WAS CAUSING NE STRANDS WITHIN THE PARTY BECAUSE SOME ELEMENTS OF THE PARTY BELIEVE THAT THE PARTY SHOULD TAKE A MORE AGGRESSIVE ROLE. IN ADDITION HE SAID THERE ARE SOME WHO INSTINCTIVELY  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 ROME 05843 301836Z

IDENTIFY WITH THE BASIC REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH OF THE RED BRIGADES, ALTHOUGH THESE ARE CLEARLY A MINORITY. HE SAID THAT HE IS INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE SOME IN PCI WHO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE RED BRIGADES AND THE MORO KIDNAPPING THAN THEY ARE WILLING TO TELL THE GOVERNMENT. HE ADDED THAT HE HAD NO PROOF OF THIS BUT THAT HE IS CONVINCED THAT IT IS TRUE.

5. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ABOUT IMPACT OF THE MORO KIDNAPPING ON THE DC, LETTIERI SAID IT HAS HAD A DISASTROUS IMPACT ON THE PARTY SECRETARIAT, WHICH IS, WITHOUT MORO, LEADERLESS. WITHOUT DEVELOPING THE THEME AT LENGTH LETTIERI COMMENTED THAT, AT THE MOMENT, MORO IS THE ONLY PERSON CAPABLE OF KEEPING THE DC UNITED. SHOULD MORO RETURN AND BE ABLE TO RESUME HIS POLITICAL CAREER HE WOULD BE A "HERO" IN THE COUNTRY AND IN THE PARTY, INCREASING BOTH THE PARTY'S STRENGTH WITH THE ELECTORATE AND HIS AUTHORITY WITHIN THE PARTY. SHOULD MORO NOT RETURN OR NOT BE ABLE PHYSICALLY TO RESUME HIS POLITICAL ACTIVITY, THERE IS NO ONE

WHO COULD REPLACE HIM. AS THE PARTY MOVES TOWARD ITS  
SHOWDOWN ON THE ISSUE OF THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE  
COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNING PROCESS,  
THERE WILL BE A REAL RISK OF A PROFOUND SPLIT WITHIN  
THE PARTY IF IT DOES NOT HAVE THE LEADERSHIP OF MORO.  
WHATEVER HAPPENS WITH REGARD TO MORO, LETTIEIR FULLY  
EXPECTS PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR.GARDNER

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NNN

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